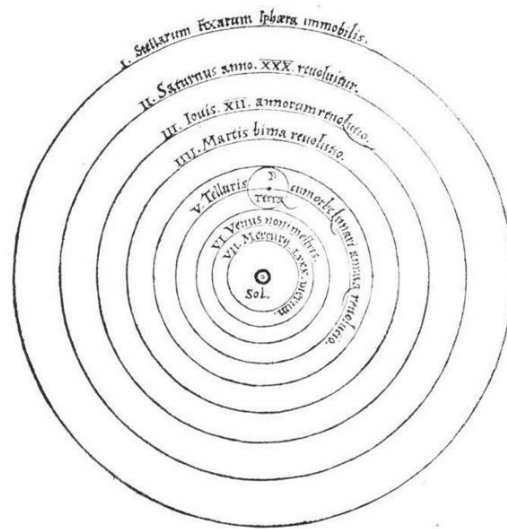


net, in quo terram cum orbe lunari tanquam epicyclo contineri diximus. Quinto loco Venus nono mense reducitur, Sextum deniq; locum Mercurius tenet, octuaginta dierum spacio circū currens, In medio uero omnium residet Sol. Quis enim in hoc



pulcherrimo templo lampadem hanc in alio uel meliori loco poneret, quàm unde totum simul possit illuminare: Siquidem non inepte quidam lucernam mundi, alij mentem, alij rectorem uocant. Trimegistus uisibilem Deum, Sophoclis Electra intuentē omnia. Ita profecto tanquam in solio regali Sol residens circum agentem gubernat Astrorum familiam. Tellus quoq; minime fraudatur lunari ministerio, sed ut Aristoteles de animalibus ait, maximā Luna cū terra cognationē habet, Concipit interea à Sole terra, & impregnatur annuo partu. Inuenimus igitur sub hac

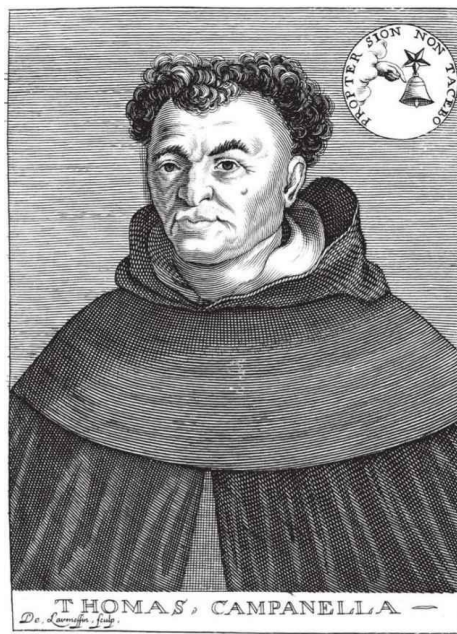
The famous page from Copernicus *On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres* (1543) showing his world-changing diagram of the sun-centred solar system. Less famously, just four lines below, he acknowledges his inspiration, the esoteric works of ‘Trimegistus’ – the legendary Egyptian sage Thrice-Great Hermes.
(Bridgeman)



Detail from the lavish decoration of the Vatican's fifteenth- century Appartamento Borgia, showing Hermes Trismegistus and Moses receiving divine inspiration from the Egyptian goddess Isis – somewhat unusual for a pope's personal rooms. But this does show the extreme veneration that even the head of the Church accorded the demi-god of the Hermeticists.
(Author's collection)

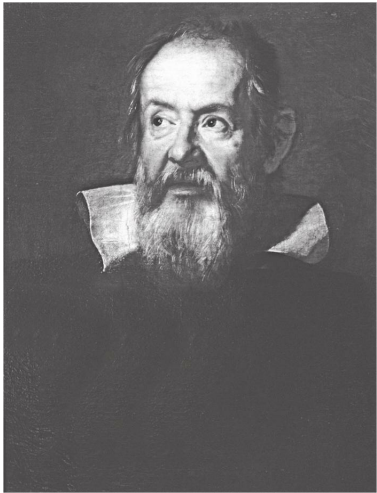


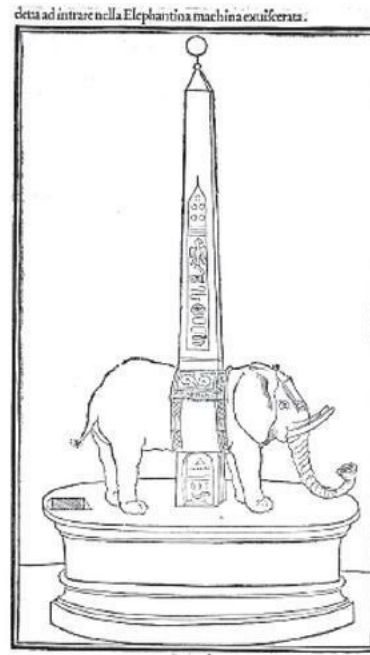
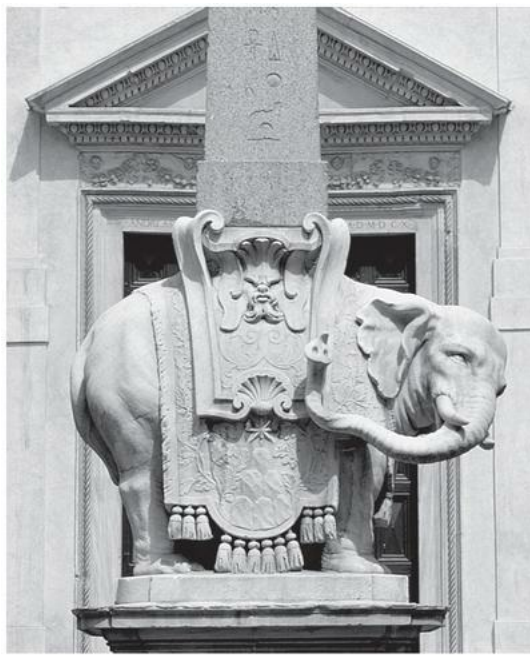
The belief that Christianity could trace its origins via Hermeticism to ancient Egypt was taken to its extreme by the uncompromising Giordano Bruno, whose statue now stands on the spot in Rome where he was burned to death by the Church for heresy in 1600.
(Science Photo Library)



Bruno’s belief that Copernicus’ new model of the solar system would literally trigger a new age of spiritual and scientific enlightenment was shared by his successor Tommaso Campanella (*left*), who in turn was a close friend and advisor to Galileo(*below*). Considered science’s great martyr because of his persecution by the Church, the evidence indicates that Galileo was motivated at least as much by the Hermetic significance of heliocentricity.

(top: Mary Evans Picture Library; bottom: Bridgeman)

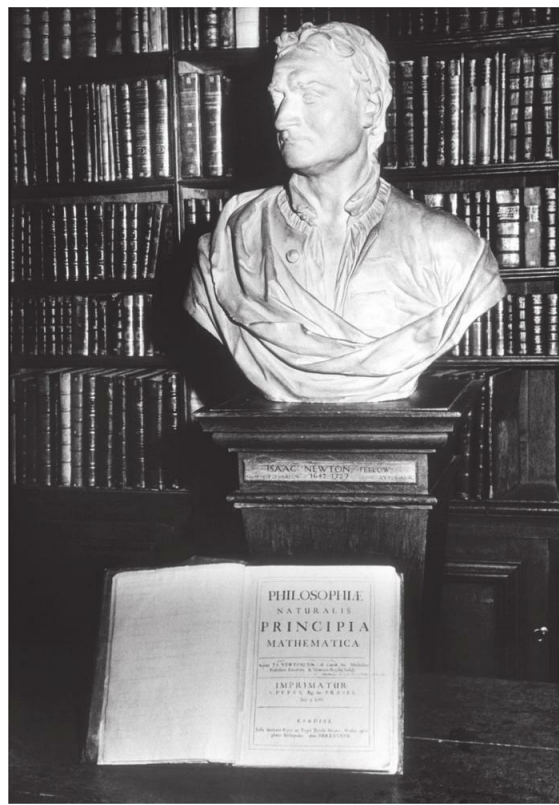




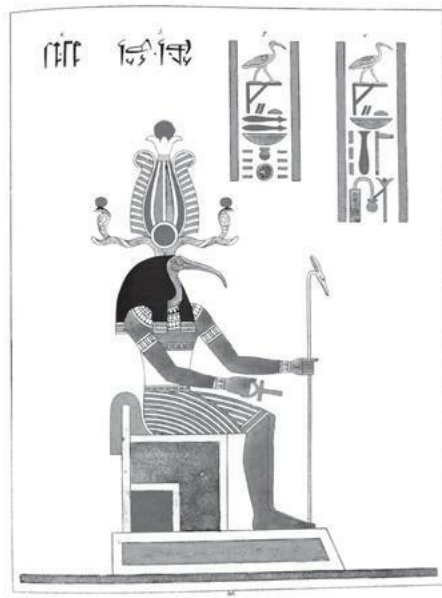
Still standing tall in Rome, these ancient Egyptian obelisks re-erected in the 1650s by the remarkable Hermetic Jesuit Athanasius Kircher and the famous sculptor Bernini are replete with Hermetic symbolism. Their monument (*above left*), erected outside the church where Bruno and Galileo were condemned, draws its symbolism from the extraordinary esoteric work *Hypnoerotomachia Poliphili* (*above right*). (both images: Bridgeman)



Similarly the Fountain of the Four Rivers in Rome's Piazza Navona, encodes Hermetic secrets, as does Kircher's book on the subject, *Obeliscus Pawphilius* (*its frontispiece, opposite*).



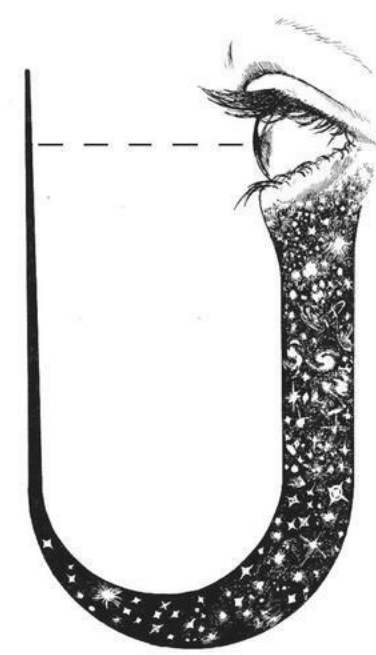
Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727), whose work on gravity and the laws of motion was set out in the *Principia Mathematica*, effectively created the modern technological world. Although the most famous scientist in history he was utterly dedicated to the magical Hermetic tradition, whose principles actually drove his masterpiece.
(Science Photo Library)



Although long doubted, recent research has shown that the Hermetic texts do indeed have their roots in ancient Egypt. Not only is Hermes Trismegistus the Egyptian god Thoth (*above left*) but the books encapsulate the wisdom of Heliopolis, magical city of the sun. This was the religion that inspired the building of the pyramids of Giza (*above right*) and the world's oldest religious writings, the Pyramid Texts (*below*).

(top left: Bridgeman; other images: author's collection)





(top-left) The early universe as captured by the Hubble Space Telescope. The understanding emerging from modern physics is rapidly converging with the ancient Hermetic vision of the cosmos as the mind of God – and, to the Hermeticists, therefore also the mind of humankind. The notion of the ‘participatory universe’ developed by the eminent American physicist John Archibald Wheeler *(below)* intimately links human consciousness to the creation and growth of the universe, as depicted in his famous ‘U and eye’ diagram *(top-right)*. In the act of observing the universe, intelligent life is in some way actually creating it.

(top-left: NASA; top-right: Keith Prince; bottom: Science Photo Library)

